



Shodekeh Remixes National Anthem

The Ultimate Star-Spangled Event

Shodekeh Remixes National Anthem

Renowned Beat Box Artist

Interprets the Star-Spangled Banner

With Baltimore Boom Bap Society, Embody,
and Classical Revolution

September 14, 2014, 5pm

August 28, 2014, BALTIMORE — Two hundred years to the day that Francis Scott Key wrote The Star-Spangled Banner, renowned beat box artist **Shodekeh** leads a new interpretation of the National Anthem that fuses hip hop, beat box, and classical music. Three musical groups convened by Shodekeh, representing the vocal arts, classical music, and hip hop, come together on September 14, 2014, 5pm at the Reginald F. Lewis Museum in Baltimore, Maryland for an electrifying performance. Their new interpretation speaks to our ever-evolving country and the diversity of voices within it.

Shodekeh collaborates with **Baltimore Boom Bap Society**, a group that performs improvised hip hop; **Embod**y, a group of vocal artists ranging from throat singers to opera lyricists; and **Classical Revolution**, a collection of classically-trained musicians who perform classical music in unexpected places.

Beginning at 5:30 pm, participants will walk from one site within the museum to the next to hear each group perform. The performances are based on untold stories about The Star-Spangled Banner. Frederick Douglass, for example, was a violinist in his free time and reportedly played the song. Another untold story is

Ethel Ennis' a capella performance of the anthem at President Nixon's inauguration. Her choice to sing unaccompanied was a first and was her way to de-politicize the song.

"It is my hope that these untold stories will unlock how people view the song, the flag, and their relationship to the country," says Shodekeh. In total, fifteen untold stories will be referenced, in honor of the fifteen stars in the original Star-Spangled Banner flag. The performance will crescendo as Embody, Classical Revolution, and the Baltimore Boom Bap Society unite for a finale performance in the museum theater.

A Statement of Rebellion and Reconciliation

"There's a standard, default culture regarding the National Anthem, and I wanted to veer away from that and focus on a culturally alternative version of the song and its legacy," Shodekeh says.

There's a history of musicians interpreting the National Anthem with a new lens. Jimi Hendrix's performance at Woodstock in 1969, for instance, was met at first with hostility. The transformation of the Hendrix interpretation from shocking and condemned, to legendary and accepted, is almost as significant as the performance itself. In the 1940s, Boston police asked that Igor Stravinsky not perform his arrangement of the anthem because his changes were considered too radical.

The anthem itself is a re-interpretation of an English drinking song. "It was common practice in early American music to take an existing tune and add new words to it," says mezzo soprano Alana Kolb of Embody. "In the Civil War, both sides would take folk songs that were traditional and apply new words to them. It was meant to show dominance and be provocative," says Blair Skinner, a violinist with Classical Revolution.

The musicians hope that audience members come away inspired to explore their own relationship to the flag and our country. Perhaps "their perceptions will be shifted," says DJDubble8, co-founder of Baltimore Boom Bap Society. "The National Anthem Remix performance, in many ways connects our past, present and future," says Dr. Skipp Sanders, Executive Director of the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. "By looking at the history behind Francis Scott Key's Star-Spangled Banner, we are shedding light on the unheard voices that make up of the fabric of our nation. By performing the song in 2014 with all of the creativity that the three groups will bring to it, we promote togetherness and unity: behind one song are many voices and many personal interpretations of it. This performance speaks to the future, as well. There's still a lot of racial healing to do in this country, as we have recently seen in the news. However, regardless of our backgrounds, we're all American."

About the Artists

Baltimore Boom Bap Society is conceived as a forum for experimentation and collaboration between hip-hop artists, while placing hip-hop in dialogue with other forms of music. Co-producers Wendel Patrick & DJ Dubble8 invite special guests to perform with them in diverse combinations, to explore a hybrid of free improvisation and beat-based composition. [Visit their Facebook page. \(https://www.facebook.com/pages/Baltimore-Boom-Bap-Society/342451369117476\)](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Baltimore-Boom-Bap-Society/342451369117476)

Classical Revolution Baltimore is a collective of musicians that work to promote public art, and engage new audiences in classical music in Baltimore City. They organize free performances in unlikely venues and neighborhoods. Since its inception in 2011, Classical Revolution Baltimore has convened more than 75 performances in Station North, West Baltimore and Mount Vernon, and led a workshop with the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra's OrchKids, to name a few. For more information visit: <http://www.classicalrevolutionbaltimore.org/> (<http://www.classicalrevolutionbaltimore.org/>)

Directed by Dominic Shodekeh Talifero, known simply as Shodekeh, **Embody** focuses on the vocal arts in all its different forms used, including opera singing, throat singing, beatboxing and vocal percussion. Shodekeh's groundbreaking performances have been featured in *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. [Visit their Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/Shodekeh\)](https://www.facebook.com/Shodekeh).

Shedding Light On 'Untold Stories'

The performance is in conjunction with the exhibition *For Whom It Stands: the Flag and the American People*. The inspiration for the exhibition is Grace Wisher, the thirteen-year old African American girl who contributed to the creation of the Star-Spangled Banner. During the War of 1812, flag maker Mary Pickersgill sewed the original Star-Spangled Banner flag in a house next to the Reginald F. Lewis Museum. While Pickersgill's story is well-known, Wisher's largely forgotten role serves as a basis for the musicians to share other stories about the flag, so that they, too, are not forgotten.

Critical Praise

Baltimore Magazine has named 'For Whom It Stands' its 2014 Best of Baltimore winner in the category of Best Historical Exhibition. 'For Whom It Stands' has also received acclaim from *USA Today*, which featured it among its 'Top Must-See Summer Exhibits' in the nation.

About the Reginald F. Lewis Museum

The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture is Baltimore's premier facility highlighting the history and accomplishments of African Americans with a special focus on Maryland's African American community. A Smithsonian affiliate, the museum is the East Coast's largest African American museum, occupying an 82,000 square-foot facility with ample permanent and special exhibition space, interactive learning environments, auditorium, resource center, oral history recording studio, museum shop, café, classrooms, meeting rooms, outside terrace and reception areas. The museum is located near Baltimore's Inner Harbor at the corner of Pratt and President Streets. The museum is also accessible on Baltimore's Charm City Circulator Orange and Green Routes. For more information, please call 443-263-1800 or visit www.RFLewisMuseum.org (<http://www.rflewismuseum.org/>)

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